

# T GETHER

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## *Pray for those in authority*

Revd Nathan Falla

The apostle Paul when he writes in 1 Timothy urges Christians to pray for all those in authority. This week has seen the National Parliamentary Prayer Breakfast and the International Ministerial Conference on Freedom of Religion or Belief it has also seen a wave of resignations that has risen as I have written this article and observed the Liaison Committee. On Wednesday following the Committee it stood as 2 cabinet members, 15 government ministers, 15 parliamentary private secretaries (PPS), and 3 others, with a delegation of Cabinet Ministers preparing to go to Downing Street to ask for Prime Minister to resign. On Thursday morning it rose to 5 cabinet members, 25 government ministers, 23 PPS and 6 others. Latest reports are that Boris Johnson is going to resign.

Sajid Javid MP in his resignation speech in the House of Commons on Wednesday referenced Revd Les Isaac's address that he heard at the Parliamentary Prayer Breakfast on Tuesday saying: "You (the Speaker of the House), I, my Right Honourable Friend the Prime Minister, and colleagues from across this House, broke bread together at the Parliamentary Prayer Breakfast. And listened to the words of Reverend Les Isaac. Who spoke about the responsibility that comes with leadership - the responsibility to serve the interests of others above your own and to seek the common good."

Revd Les Isaac also drew on the example of Jesus who demonstrated compassion for the weak and the poor. He spoke about the challenge to serve with humility. Jesus came into the world to serve, but Jesus also expects us as the church to serve with humility. Christ calls us to be faithful, "all of us have influence, all of us have the ability to influence and to make a difference and we are called to serve, to work together for the common good, not just for the party, not for the denomination but for humanity... May you Lord help us as we continue to serve"

Undoubtedly at this time we need to pray for those in authority, for truth to be heard and for all leaders to have integrity as they serve the common good. As part of the Prayer Breakfast the hymns *Praise my soul, the King of heaven, Lord for the years* and *We seek your Kingdom* were sung. *We seek your Kingdom* is a prayer song written especially for public servants and politicians:

*Peace, truth and justice reigning everywhere*

*With us be present in our public square*

*Fill all who lead with your integrity*

*Transform, revive and heal society.*

*Faithful to govern ever may we be*

*Selfless in service, loving constantly*

*In everything may your authority*

*Transform, revive and heal society.*

May these words guide our prayers as we pray for those in authority.



# Who is my neighbour?

Online Circuit Service Sermon | Revd Nathan Falla

Reading: Luke 10:25-37

## 1. Online Service

Join us from 10:30am on Sunday for our online Circuit Service which this week is led by Revd Nathan Falla.

Find it on the 'Newark and Southwell Methodist Circuit' YouTube Channel (<https://www.youtube.com/NewarkSouthwellMethodistCircuit>) why not invite a friend to watch it with you and share the link with them on your social media or by email!

## 2. Zoom Opportunities

If you're feeling isolated, are not ready to be face to face yet, or can't, but are happy to meet on Zoom, there is a weekly coffee time at 3pm on a Monday run by Charles Street but open to all, email Mel Watson for more details: [mellwatson42@gmail.com](mailto:mellwatson42@gmail.com).

There is also still a weekly Zoom fellowship called 'The Gathering' which is part of Southwell Methodist Church and run by Philip and Francine Holmes. You'd be most welcome, contact Philip to connect: [philipholmes8100@gmail.com](mailto:philipholmes8100@gmail.com).

## 3. Radio Services

**BBC Radio 4** (Also [online](#).)  
08:10am – 10<sup>th</sup> July 2022

### Sea Sunday

A service from Portsmouth Cathedral to mark Sea Sunday.

The preacher is The Venerable Andrew Hillier QHC, Chaplain of the Fleet and Archdeacon for the Royal Navy. The music is sung by the Cathedral Choir – made up for the broadcast of Girl Choristers, Lay Clerks and Choral Scholars. The readings are: Jonah 2: 1-10 and Mark 4:35-41.

The parable of the Good Samaritan is probably one of the most well-known parables of Jesus, and the commentator Michael Wilcock has said “thousands of people, Christians and non-Christians, set this before themselves as the ideal of neighbourly love.” But how many people live anywhere near the ideal? Do we? It seems that the news is full of everything except neighbourly love.

In our reading Luke recalls the incident when a lawyer or leader stands up to test Jesus “teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus answers the question by saying “what is written in the law” but he continues by turning the tables and asking a question of the lawyer “how do you read it.”

It was common at the time for this to happen, teachers often responded to questions with counter questions, and this is exactly what Jesus does. The lawyer responds by quoting Scripture and Jesus commends him for the answer, but the lawyer asks a second question, “and who is my neighbour.” With this question the lawyer is trying to gain credibility as the answer to his first question was obviously one that he knew, so he asks for an interpretation ‘in effect he says, “But the real question is: who is my neighbour.”’ Jesus answers this by telling the lawyer the parable of the Good Samaritan. Parables were often used as a way of illustrating a point when teaching a concept that was difficult to grasp.

Once Jesus had told the story, the lawyer had great difficulty in accepting the concept that Jesus had taught; when Jesus asks the lawyer “which of these three do you think was a neighbour to the man” (10:36) the lawyer cannot even bring himself to say “the Samaritan,” instead he avoids the issue and replies “the one who showed him mercy” (10:37). The lawyer finds the parable of the Good Samaritan so difficult to accept because the Jewish concept of neighbour was understood as fellow Jew, but Jesus broadens the concept to include Samaritan and there was a very negative relationship between Jews and Samaritans. On first glance, when Jesus tells the parable, the lawyer could accept that the priest and the Levite walked by to avoid becoming unclean and would be expecting a Jewish layperson as the third person to save the day, giving the parable an anti-religious establishment point.

However, even more alarming within the story, is the notion that like the Samaritan the priest and Levite were travelling away from Jerusalem to return home, having completed his time of serving in the temple. They could have faced the potential risk of being deemed unclean for touching a potential corpse because they would have had the time required to go through the purification rights!

This all makes it even more surprising for the Samaritan to be chosen as the person to save the day; the one to stop and show love and compassion by attending to the man's injuries and making arrangements for his recovery, because this went against everything which the traditional Jew thought. As C S Keener writes: “Jews and Samaritans traditionally had no

love for each other; although violence was the exception rather than the rule, the literature of each betrays an attitude of hostility toward the other. Samaritans were a people of mixed Jewish and Gentile ancestry who claimed descent from Jacob and worshiped the God of Israel, but felt that Mount Gerizim rather than Jerusalem was the holy site for worship. They engaged the Jews in bitter rivalry, often leading to political hostilities in Jesus' day, sometimes requiring Roman intervention."

Therefore, when Jesus mentioned the name Samaritan, the listeners would have been shocked and horrified as Jews hated Samaritans, and there was certainly no concept of a good Samaritan, but this means that the point that Jesus makes is even more profound – the concept of neighbour really has no boundaries and the concept of love has no boundaries either too.

Throughout Jesus' ministry he breaks down barriers, here Jesus breaks down the cultural and racial barriers, discrimination has no part to play in the kingdom of God. To truly love our neighbour is not a feeling but it needs to be lived out in action. What barriers may there be in our lives, in our attitudes and actions?

In 1869, Methodist minister the Reverend Thomas Bowman found a group of children living under the arches of Waterloo station in London. Moved by what he saw, he set up a small family home in a nearby stable and helped two boys, Fred and George, off the street. He gave these children a safe and loving home, an education and hope for the future – the gift of childhood. Thomas saw the injustices in our society and the need to demonstrate God's love he founded the first Methodist Children's Home, to become the National Children's Home or Action for Children.

That was over 150 years ago, tragically, across the UK today, vulnerable children and young people continue to experience similar challenges – of neglect, abuse and homelessness – to those faced by Fred and George. Today's world also presents countless new difficulties and, for far too many of our children, childhood hurts. But, Thomas Stephenson's compassion and determination should continue to inspire us. If we stand by the side of struggling children and families, things will change. With our support, Action for Children can make sure every child has the best start in life, a safe and loving home, and the opportunity to fulfil their potential.

Who are we called to love? Who are we called to reach out to? God has reached out to us in Jesus Christ and demonstrated his amazing, outrageous, awesome and radical love to us. Are we not called to do the same? In all this we may be brought up sharp, we may recognise that we have put limits on God's love and denied God's grace to all people. We may call to mind those times when we have been silent, or have not challenged words or actions that have made us uncomfortable. Are we prepared to listen? To be challenged, to be changed? Are we prepared to love? Are we prepared to embrace our neighbour?

Who is our neighbour? Everyone is our neighbour.

## Prayer Space

### *Prayers for others*

We pray for victims of violence,  
for victims of prejudice...  
for those who are passed by  
in the streets of our towns and cities,  
for those whose needs are unwelcome...  
for those whose wounds go untended,  
whose cries go unheard...  
for those blinded by dogma,  
for those who create division...  
for those afraid of their neighbours,  
for those isolated in their communities...

We pray, too, for those courageous enough  
to cross boundaries:  
for those whose compassion changes lives,  
for those whose giving is costly,  
for those whose ministry is dangerous.

Unwanted, unvalued, unplanned, alone,  
abused, neglected, abandoned, isolated,  
withdrawn, erratic, rejected, dejected,  
a challenge, a burden, dependent, needy,  
unfed, unclothed, unwashed, unloved,  
violent, untrustworthy, hard, cruel,  
robbed of their childhood.

Lord, these are your children, our children,  
entrusted to our keeping.  
We pray for all children, all young people,  
all families who struggle,  
victims of circumstance, of poverty,  
of another's deliberate act.  
Give strength and comfort  
to those in need.  
and let us no longer sit complacently by.

Empower and encourage charities such as  
Action for Children  
as they seek to protect, support,  
nurture and provide.  
Impart your wisdom to the decision-  
makers in government  
shake us from our apathy,  
fill our hearts with compassion  
and our lives with determination.  
So that all your children may experience  
your gift of childhood  
joyful, playful, innocent and loved,  
as you ordained it should be.

Receive our prayers  
and make neighbours of strangers,  
bring healing where there is pain,  
vision where there is small-mindedness  
and use us to bring others  
to a place of safety and love.  
Amen.

## Hymns and worship songs

Songs chosen for inclusion in the YouTube service:

*God is love, his the care* – StF 403, H&P 220

*There's a wideness in God's mercy* – StF 416, H&P 230

*Who can sound the depths* – StF 723, SOF 604

*Lord, thy church on earth is seeking* – StF 410, H&P 774

Please click on the song title to access YouTube clip of each song.

## Discussion Questions

**Church is best done together but we know that this isn't always possible - particularly if you're housebound, isolated or even shielding. But why not contact a friend and arrange to watch the church service online or read the newsletter simultaneously and get in touch by telephone afterwards to talk about it. Below are some questions that might help you to reflect together!**

1. When you think of neighbour, what do you normally think about?
2. How does the parable of the Good Samaritan change your understanding of neighbour?
3. What do you find is the biggest challenge of seeing everybody as your neighbour?
4. How can you show love and concern to your local neighbour and your global neighbour?
5. Have you given or received help, to or from someone that you would consider "stranger"? How did it make you feel? What did you learn?

## In person worship across the Circuit during the next four weeks...

June-August 2022		10th July Action for Children	17th July Rural Mission Sunday	24th July	31st July
Balderton	10.30am	Morley HC	Winnington	A Trowbridge	Beech
	Other				
Charles Street	10.30am	LA	Pailing	West	N Falla HC
	6pm	N Falla HC	Hardy	Sulston	Hart
Collingham	10.45am	LA	N Falla	K Trowbridge	Hall HC / US
Elston	10.45am	Breakfast at Hope Hawtonville 9am		Hucknall HC / T	Pearce
Hope Community	10.30am	N Falla Breakfast / at H'ville / 9am	Gibson at B'gate / HC	Hardy at H'ville	N Falla SoP / at H'ville / 3pm
Long Bennington	10.30am	A Trowbridge	Dalby T	N Falla HC	Winnington
North End	6pm	Beech	Mathews	N Falla HC	LA
North Muskham	10.30am	Dalby		Hibberts	Hart
	2pm		Hall Café		
Southwell	10am	Pearce	Hibberts HC	Ward	C Falla
	Other		Hart 4pm	Hibberts Fringe	
Sutton-on-Trent	10.30am	LA Breakfast / 9am	Hucknall HC / US / T	United Service at Parish Church HC / 10am	LA at Tuxford Cafe / 2pm



## Pray for the President & Vice-president

The Revd Canon Graham Thompson and Mr Anthony Boateng took office on June 25<sup>th</sup> at the Methodist Conference. You can follow their year on the Methodist Church website (just the diary for July-September is currently available).

Graham has asked that people uphold them in prayer and if you would like to join an email prayer support and be informed of particular concerns and areas for prayer then please email Colin Beckett on [colin1244@gmail.com](mailto:colin1244@gmail.com) and he will keep you informed.

Graham has already hit the road running and has had engagements at Southlands College, London and Hartlip Methodist Church, Kent. Graham's Facebook page is also well worth a follow.